

Congress of the United States
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August 20, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Blinken and Secretary Austin,

I write today to express extreme concern about the safety of our Afghan Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) allies and their families still in Afghanistan. These Afghans risked their lives, and the lives of their families, to support the United States with the hope of one day creating a democratically engaged country and I believe it is a moral imperative to support their immediate passage to safety.

The Sacramento region is home to nearly 12,000 Afghan people, one of the largest populations in the United States. I am proud to represent these Afghans who have given so much and have found a strong community in Northern California. However, the developments of the past year have reopened many old wounds and left countless family members in an extremely dangerous and volatile situation in Afghanistan. This evacuation has disproportionately impacted the residents and families of Sacramento – many with family members still in Afghanistan.

As a Member of Congress, my staff and I have relied upon the most up-to-date information and resources available to my constituents and their families in Afghanistan. Yet, we are finding that the information, specifically about Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA) gate openings, has been sporadic and inaccurate. In some cases, the provided information has led families to closed gates, gates guarded by foreign officials, or gates with different or multiple names.

Accordingly, I request that the State Department work with the Department of Defense to provide Congressional offices with a centralized resource that can be shared to provide an orderly and up-to-date guide for entrance and consular processing. These communications must explicitly state which gates are accepting people and what requirements are essential for entrance.

I have heard from constituent family members that have had documents approved, but are struggling to get inside the boundaries of the airport. This is unacceptable. The Taliban's presence around the airport requires accurate information, and unnecessary travel can place families in dangerous situations.

Additionally, the U.S. must enforce a safe travel corridor beyond the airport. The ability for Afghans to cross Kabul to reach HKIA, particularly for those with young children and older family members, is nearly impossible. A safe travel corridor is essential to maximize capacity. This corridor must extend to the airport gates to ensure order and avoid stampedes and unrest. I look forward to working with you on this pressing matter.

Sincerely,



Doris Matsui
MEMBER OF CONGRESS